

VZCZCXRO3456  
PP RUEHMA RUEHPA  
DE RUEHUJA #0852/01 1221555  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
P 021555Z MAY 07  
FM AMEMBASSY ABUJA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9387  
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE  
RUEHWR/AMEMBASSY WARSAW 0302  
RUEHCD/AMCONSUL CIUDAD JUAREZ 0298  
RUEHOS/AMCONSUL LAGOS 6758  
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHINGTON DC  
RUEHC/DEPT OF LABOR WASHDC  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC  
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE  
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 000852

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR DRL, AF/W  
DOL FOR SUDHA DALEY  
DOE FOR CAROLYN GAY

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [ELAB](#) [NI](#) [ELECTIONS](#)  
SUBJECT: LABOR CONDEMNS ELECTIONS AT MAY DAY CELEBRATION

REF: A. LAGOS 302  
[1](#)B. ABUJA 791  
[1](#)C. ABUJA 747

ABUJA 00000852 001.2 OF 002

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED. NOT FOR INTERNET POSTING.

[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY. At a joint National Labour Congress (NLC) and Trade Union Congress (TUC) May Day celebration in Abuja, labor leaders condemned the April 2007 state and national elections and voiced displeasure with the failure of the Obasanjo administration to address basic issues affecting labor. While the presenters did not hold back in their criticisms of the elections or the administration, it is clear that the message was passed to those gathered to keep the event peaceful and not let it develop into a protest. Labor leaders indicated they will continue to work with civil society to "find a way out of the current crisis," though they did not offer any specifics. Police and security personnel were visible in large numbers and screened all placards and banners brought to the event, not permitting any messages related to the elections. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Among a peaceful and calm crowd at Abuja's May Day celebration, leaders of the Nigerian labor movement delivered strong condemnations of the 2007 elections. TUC President Peter Esele called the elections a "rape on democracy," adding that they had "failed the nation." NLC President Abdulwahed Ibrahim Omar told the crowd that "whatever government is formed based on these flawed elections will be politically and morally disabled. The Nigerian people have a duty to ensure that the country is not led again by people who have no mandate. Indeed, our country can not make progress if its affairs are managed without the consent of its people, expressed through free and fair elections." Esele also announced the intent of the labor movement to put forward a presidential aspirant in 2011. Despite these strong messages, however, the leaders offered no insights into future actions of the labor movement, both noting only that they are in consultation with interest groups to "fashion a way out of this crisis."

13. (SBU) Esele and Omar were also frank in their critique of the Obasanjo administration and its failure to address important labor issues, including: increasing unemployment, reduction in power supply, increased reliance on imported fuel, loss of manufacturing jobs, pension arrears, casualization of the workforce, monetization of civil servant benefits, education and health. Omar called for a new approach to governance, noting that "in many spheres of life, (Nigeria) is in a notably backward movement under a ruling elite that does not appreciate the challenges of government."

Notably, President Obasanjo (though listed on the program) did not attend and sent Minister of Labor Mohammed Hassan Lawal in his place. A presentation by a representative of Abuja Federal Capital Territory Minister Malam Nasir El-Rufai elicited several minutes of sustained booing, especially during the representative's attempt to outline the Minister's positive labor policies.

14. (SBU) Police and security officials were present in large numbers and Inspector General of Police Sunday Ehindero made it clear in the days prior to the event that any activity qualifying as a protest or demonstration would be shut down. Poloff noted three individuals walking toward the venue with anti-Yar'Adua signs and received word minutes later that three protesters had been arrested on their way to the venue.

Although police and security officials did not allow participants to enter the venue with placards or banners related to the elections, placards critical of the administration were allowed. A few of note were:

- Education is a Right, NOT a Privilege
- Stop Corruption; Save Nigeria
- Reform Yourself Before Reforming Us
- HELP! Aso Savings and Loan Has Made Us Bankrupt
- We Can't Be Slaves in Our Own Country

15. (SBU) COMMENT. It was clear, given the crowd's positive

ABUJA 00000852 002.2 OF 002

reaction to strong statements condemning the elections and criticizing the Obasanjo administration (and the booing of El-Rufai's representative) that those present would have needed little persuasion to use the occasion to stage a protest. Omar and Esele had plainly gotten the message out to their constituent unions that a protest would only give cause to shut down the event. It remains, however, unclear what actions, if any, the labor leaders may plan in response to the elections and as each day passes momentum is lost.

END COMMENT.

CAMPBELL